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10 Keith A. Turner

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**STRATEGY, THE SOVIET UNION  
AND THE 1980's**

**by**

**Keith A. Dunn**

**1 April 1981**

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## **NOTE**

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## **FOREWORD**

The main task of a strategist is to balance shortfalls in certain areas with advantages in others to minimize risk and maximize the chances of achieving national interests. This memorandum examines US-Soviet relations from a strategist's point of view. The author first discusses fundamental US national interests. Then he analyzes major Soviet economic, political, and military midrange trends and how they might impact upon US interests. The author concludes with a variety of options which would enable the United States to minimize Soviet advantages and maximize US opportunities to achieve its national interests.

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This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.



JACK N. MERRITT  
Major General, USA  
Commandant

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#### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR**

**DR. KEITH A. DUNN** joined the Strategic Studies Institute as a civilian in the summer of 1977. Prior to that time he was an Army intelligence officer. Dr. Dunn earned a master's degree and doctorate from the University of Missouri in American diplomatic relations, and has written and published articles on the interrelationships between detente and deterrence, the origins of the Cold War, and the Soviet military.

## SUMMARY

It is commonplace to hear critics bemoan the decline of US power vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. Often the pundits seem to be saying if the United States would or could only build a larger military force and man that force with better trained personnel all of America's problems of strategy would go away. While no one would deny that more equipment and more personnel would solve some problems, strategy is more than building bigger and better military forces. Strategists never should assume that they will ever have everything in the right amounts that they want. The main task of the strategist is to balance shortfalls in certain areas with advantages in others to minimize risk and maximize the chances of achieving US national interests. This memorandum examines US-Soviet relations from a strategist's viewpoint.

To set the stage for subsequent analysis, this article first discusses US fundamental national interests and objectives. The four fundamental national interests discussed are: survival, protection of territorial integrity, maintenance or enhancement of economic well-being, and promotion of a favorable world order. Some of the objectives to achieve US national interests that are mentioned are: deterrence, forward deployment, containment, stability through peaceful solutions to world problems, and evolutionary rather than revolutionary change.

Since the Soviet Union has been the central focus of US foreign and defense policy for at least the last 35 years and there is no reason to believe that the USSR will become any less important in coming years, major political, economic, and military trends that will confront Soviet policymakers in the 1980's are examined next. Some of the implications of those trends and possible alternatives open to Soviet policymakers are also discussed. How Soviet trends and alternatives chosen to handle those trends may impact upon the United States achieving its national interests and objectives are analyzed. In this portion of the memorandum, Moscow's bleak economic future, its causes, and possible efforts to ameliorate it are mentioned. The problems, prospects, and challenges of Soviet political succession, when a new leadership comes to power that is inexperienced in foreign affairs but has significant military forces available to it, are also examined. Constraints upon the Soviet leadership, to include demographic patterns and military force

structure which adversely impact upon Moscow's ability to project military power beyond its contiguous borders, are also analyzed.

Finally, the author concludes by offering a variety of options to minimize US and maximize Soviet disadvantages. Some of the conclusions that the author reaches are: (1) it is imperative to ratify SALT II or modify the treaty so it can be ratified as soon as possible; (2) the United States needs to increase foreign assistance in order to demonstrate the lack of substantive Soviet commitment to North-South issues; (3) Washington should welcome a shift in US-Soviet political, military, and economic competition away from Europe and toward the Third World; (4) US military strategy and force structure needs to become more flexible than it has been in the past; (5) some changes in the positioning of US forward-based troops in Europe and Korea may need to occur so US forces will be in a better position to be used in other contingencies (Africa, Southwest Asia, etc.), if the need should arise in the future.

## **STRATEGY, THE SOVIET UNION AND THE 1980's**

The new Reagan Administration faces a number of serious domestic and international problems. In the foreign policy area, the single most important issue confronting the administration is Soviet-American relations. The administration must consider how it wants US relations with the Soviet Union to evolve; what American strategy vis-a-vis the Soviet Union should be; and, how the United States can manage growing Soviet power and the emergence of the Soviet Union as a global military rival. Currently, superpower relations are in a hiatus. What small amount of understanding that existed between Moscow and Washington began to unravel as a result of Angola and Ethiopia and was crushed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. At present, it is commonplace for critics to accuse the United States of being weak and unwilling to face up to the global Soviet threat. They point out that the Carter Administration was vulnerable to such charges and at times it could not stick to a policy once it was enunciated, e.g., witness Carter's maneuverings and backsliding on the Soviet brigade in Cuba.

Nevertheless, too many of the current criticisms about a lack of a coherent design, or strategy, in American policy seem to be based

upon nostalgia and a desire to return to a bygone era when the United States was the unchallenged political, economic, and military leader of the world. All too often there is a sense that military force is the best—possibly the only—method for dealing with the Soviet challenge. If somehow the United States could just build a larger military force and man that force with better trained personnel the United States would solve its major problems of strategy. However, strategy is more than building bigger and better forces. Strategists do not assume that they will always have as much as they want. Their main task is balancing shortfalls in certain areas with advantages in others to minimize risk and maximize the chances of achieving national interests.

Strategists' problems are compounded further because the attempt to balance risks and advantages, costs and benefits must consider existing threats to US interests and how those threats can interact to preclude the achievement of US interests. This requires some assessment of economic, political, and military trends of US adversaries. While sophisticated intelligence capabilities like satellites, radars, and listening devices can provide strategists with a wealth of data, a significant information gap still exists and strategists must infer and make the best guess possible about how events will ultimately unfurl in other nations. Recognizing the uncertainty of their projections, strategists must propose options for the United States to pursue in order to achieve declared interests and objectives.

Current events provide insights to adversaries' capabilities, suggest possible trends, and help to shape the environment in which the strategist must work. However, in the final analysis the strategists' world is the environment of the future, normally the midrange (3-10 years from the present) and/or the long range (10-20 years in the future). Although there is wide disagreement about what approach(es) should be pursued, there is essential agreement—no matter what one's political persuasion—about the most significant challenge facing strategists: how can the United States deal with the growing power of the Soviet Union?

Almost all major US foreign policy initiatives in the post-World War II era have been predicated upon the intelligence community's assessment of Soviet capabilities and trends and the policymaker's evaluation of Soviet intentions. There is no reason to believe that this situation will change drastically in the foreseeable future. In

fact, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, concerns about enhanced Soviet power projection capabilities, and fears that the Soviet achievement of nuclear parity has made the Kremlin more bold and adventuresome make it even more important that, during the decade of the 1980's, the United States does not deal with the Soviet Union on an ad hoc basis, moving from crisis to crisis, without some overall guiding concept of how it wants to deal with the emerging power of the Soviet Union. But before we can suggest options and alternatives to follow, it is necessary first to discuss US interests and objectives. Then, some of the major Soviet trends that will impact upon the USSR during the coming decade and how those trends affect US interests and objectives will be considered.

## INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES

The fundamental building blocs of strategy are the concepts of national interests and specific objectives to support the attainment of US national interests. Essentially there are four fundamental national interests common to all nations: survival, protection of territorial integrity, maintenance or enhancement of economic well-being, and promotion of a favorable world order.

The most fundamental national interest is obviously survival, because without national survival no other interest is relevant. Since the advent of the nuclear era, the primary US objective in pursuit of national survival has been nuclear deterrence. Negotiation of formal and detailed strategic nuclear arms control and prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons have been pursued as additional objectives in an attempt to limit the possibilities that nuclear war will occur. To insure that US deterrent capabilities are believable, one of our military objectives is to build offensive strategic nuclear forces based upon a triad of ICBM's, submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and bombers. These forces are intended to provide the United States with an assured destruction capability making it not worth the risk for the Soviets to strike the United States first. Since the early 1970's when the Soviets obtained a level of parity in strategic nuclear weapons, essential equivalence also has been an objective. By definition, essential equivalence does not mean that the United States has to maintain forces which reflect those of the Soviet Union. Rather, the objective is to offset Soviet advantages in one area or system

with US advantages in other areas. An integral part of this objective is to insure that the Soviets, US allies, and most importantly, American citizens do not perceive that US strategic forces are inferior to those of the Soviet Union.

Geography has provided the United States with certain advantages in its efforts to protect the territorial integrity of the United States. While there is no real defense against strategic nuclear attack, except deterrence, the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and historically compliant neighbors to the immediate north and south have made it relatively easy for the United States to protect itself from foreign invasion. As long as the United States maintains relatively strong military forces and continues to secure the air and sea lines of communication between Hawaii and Alaska, the prospect of any conventional invasion of US territory should be virtually nonexistent. This unique position provides strategists with advantages which are often overlooked. Rather than concentrating their efforts on ways to insure the defense of the home base, US strategists can primarily concern themselves with the other three fundamental national interests. Strategists in other nations do not have such a luxury.

Insuring the economic well-being of the United States is based upon two primary requirements: access to trading partners and assured access to vital national resources. In the absence of a global war with the Soviet Union, achieving the first requirement is relatively easy. Obtaining assured access to vital national resources, however, is another matter. US economic security and the economic survival of many US allies is affected increasingly by dependence upon scarce natural resources, particularly oil. The United States can be cut off from those resources in a variety of ways: cartel denial actions as OPEC initiated during the 1973 Middle East War; disruption as a result of internal revolution, insurrection, or civil war as occurred in Iran and in Zaire during the Shaba invasion; or resource denial caused by the actions of some external nation. The latter area has most affected US strategic thinking in recent years. There is a growing belief that the Soviet Union is attempting to establish a Third World alliance system which would put the USSR in a position to pressure or even to sever the industrialized world's vital trade and natural resource supply lines in times of crisis. While numerous arguments indicate that this portion of the Soviet threat has been somewhat overstated,

currently a major objective of the United States is to insure that it can effectively respond to any Soviet attempt to cut off resources to the industrialized world. Increased US worldwide military presence, additional forward basing of US military units, formation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF), and negotiations to improve US access to air and naval facilities in the Third World and to enhance surge capabilities are just a few of the military initiatives currently underway in support of this objective.

The final fundamental national interest is maintenance of a world order that is favorable to the United States. Historically, US interests have been served best by an international environment of stability. As a result, a primary US objective has been the promotion of peaceful solutions to world problems. Since the end of World War II, an equally important objective has been containment. This objective has evolved from the containment of monolithic communism to the more recent approach of selective containment of the expansion of Soviet political-military influence. To achieve these objectives, US military strategy for the last 30 years has been based upon the concepts of forward defense and collective security in an effort to deter the Soviet Union from attacking US allies and to insure that growing Soviet military power would not cause weaker nations to have no recourse but to seek political and economic accommodation with the USSR.

For illustrative purposes, specific national interests and objectives have been isolated and categorized. In reality, many strategic issues transcend arbitrary classifications. For example, containment was placed under the national interest of world order. One school of thought is that containment is fundamental to the defense of US territorial integrity. By fighting in Europe or Korea, the United States can protect its own territory from the devastation of war.

Finally, it is possible that the pursuit of one national interest or objective can conflict with the achievement of other interests and objectives. For instance, former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance has defined one US objective as the ability to promote "peace in troubled areas of the world" which "reduces potential threats of wide war and removes opportunities for our rivals to extend their influence."<sup>1</sup> A recognized and proven ability of the United States to project and sustain its forces in areas distant from its borders is one method to deter the Soviet Union from taking advantage of

crises in the Third World. However, as the recent crises in Iran and Afghanistan indicate, there are many areas in the world where US force projection capabilities are lacking and the United States needs access to facilities to increase its surge capabilities. To the extent that improved access to facilities in the Third World and the formation of the RDJTF enhance US force projection and rapid response capabilities, these actions will be positive steps.

However, an American attempt to obtain access to facilities in the Third World will not be provided free. Depending upon the particular nation and region of the world, the "return" or "quid pro quo" for improved access will cover a wide range of potential options. In some cases, Washington may simply be able to buy the desired access. Or, at the other extreme, a nation may ask for weapons with the intention of using those weapons against domestic opposition factions or to begin a conflict with a neighboring nation. It is important to recognize that in many parts of the world US interests with a potential "client" may be coincidental (e.g., to deter the USSR), but they may not be completely compatible (e.g., to promote peace in unstable regions of the world). If the payment for increased US access builds a nation's military capabilities, it very well may use those capabilities to pursue its own national interests which are in conflict with those of the United States. The Soviet-Somalia relationship from 1969-77 is an instructive example of this type of situation and should be studied as the United States negotiates to improve its access to facilities at Berbera.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, it is important to recognize that once the United States enters into agreements with other countries for access to facilities it loses some degree of leverage over the "client." By the very nature of the agreement, the "client" is providing the United States something which is important to US national interests and objectives. In addition, once access is obtained, formal status of forces agreements are signed, and some level of US presence is established, it is difficult to withdraw from those commitments. US allies and potential adversaries may view such a reduction as part of an overall decline in US commitment or diminution of political will, and such a perception could have an adverse impact upon the US ability to achieve its other national interests. A strategist's primary job is to point out such inherent conflicts between US interests and objectives and to attempt to minimize their impact upon US policy.

## SOVIET TRENDS

While it is in US—and Soviet—interests to avoid direct military confrontations with its superpower rival, conflict (whether it be political, economical, ideological, or military) is the norm among nations. This is particularly true of the Soviet-American relationship because each superpower holds radically different views for how the world order should evolve. Given the centrality of the Soviet Union to American foreign and defense planning, it is essential that strategists understand major Soviet economic, political, and military trends and some of the impacts those trends may have on Soviet policy so strategists can propose alternative options to achieve US national interests and objectives.

As the Soviet Union enters the 1980's, it faces an era of increasing difficulties and strains. Already significant problems exist within the domestic economy. Like most nations of the world, the USSR has been experiencing a declining average annual economic growth rate. Whereas in the early rebuilding years of the post-World War II period, the Soviet Gross National Product (GNP) grew at an average annual rate of 6 percent; in the 1970's its growth rate fell to below 4 percent. The best intelligence estimates indicate that this trend will continue and by the mid-to-late 1980's Soviet GNP growth may be as low as 1 or 2 percent.

For several reasons most analysts believe that, without major changes, the Soviet economic future is bleak. First, the Soviet Union is not an integrated national economy. Three distinct economic subregions exist within the USSR: European Russia, Siberia, and the southern republics. Neither an adequate transportation or a distribution network ties the three regions together. Adequate market, social, or cultural incentives to encourage permanent population migration among the three areas are also lacking. As a result, the Soviet leadership is faced with the problem that European Russia has the industrial facilities and capital for economic growth. However, it is seriously lacking in labor and most of European Russia's recoverable natural resources will probably soon be depleted. The southern republics have an overabundance of labor, but the region is lacking in capital and natural resources. On the other hand, Siberia has a wealth of natural resources and great quantities of available land, but the area has only a few industrial facilities. In some Siberian areas the

climate is so harsh as to make it virtually uninhabitable, and the transportation system is quite limited. Some time in the early 1980's the new Siberian railroad (Baikal-Amur Mainline or BAM) should be completed. It will allow the Soviets to put some new goods and services into the region, provide some raw materials to European Russia, and even provide an avenue for some export and import trade with Japan. However, given the huge overland distances which separate the BAM area from Russia's economic heartland and the paucity of the overall intra-Siberian transportation system, the new railroad will have only a marginal impact upon the Soviet domestic economy. If Moscow continues its refusal to negotiate with Japan on the northern islands issue, there will be only limited foreign trade with Japan for BAM to support. The new rail line's most important contribution may be in the military area in case a Sino-Soviet conflict ever occurs.

Second, despite optimistic claims to the contrary, the Soviet Union has not matched the industrial and technological revolution which has been ongoing in Western Europe, Japan, and the United States for the last 20 years. The USSR prefers to follow a path of selective imitation rather than adopting significant changes in products and processes. Soviet industry continues to retain old plant and capital equipment in service for longer times than is Western practice. By necessity, many Soviet industries use antiquated technology. Even though most observers agree that major innovative and technological changes must occur if Soviet industrial output is to increase, the incentives for such innovation are lacking within the Soviet system.<sup>3</sup>

Innovations are risky and in the Soviet system the potential rewards resulting from the success of some innovative practice do not outweigh the potential bad consequences of a failure. Moreover, as experience in other industrialized nations has shown, technological progress may temporarily contribute to unemployment as more efficient machines replace manual workers. Since it is a Soviet dictum that unemployment does not exist under socialism, there is a reluctance to adopt changes that put people out of work. More importantly, since it is the state that owns the means of production, determines the industrial output quotas, and dispenses the rewards and punishments for meeting or not meeting the goals of the State plan, there is a natural tendency on the part of plant managers toward status quo and filling the plan. To suggest

alternative methods or to overachieve implies that the State plan was somehow in error. Finally, Soviet economic decisionmakers have a vested interest that their particular industrial, plant, enterprise, etc. is not made obsolete by some technological change. If an official's enterprise is displaced by technology or innovation, not only his economic but also his political and social status is affected. There are instances in Soviet history where enterprises have continued to function primarily to protect bureaucratic interests rather than because of efficiency or need. For example, in the 1950's, when the Mikoyan rather than the Yakovlev design bureau received Stalin's approval to produce a new combat aircraft (the MIG-15), Yakovlev personally appealed to Stalin to revise his decision because as Yakovlev recounts, "I was very worried about the situation developing in our design bureau. You see, behind me stood 100 people who might lose faith in me as the leader of the design collective." The net result was that Stalin also approved production of the Yak-25 in order to satisfy Yakovlev.<sup>4</sup>

Third, while overall Soviet agricultural progress in the last 20 years has been respectable, with an average growth of 3.5 percent, the future level of agricultural production is uncertain at best. Agriculture continues to be the least productive sector of the Soviet economy. Low labor productivity, high costs of production, and serious environmental constraints are the major Soviet agricultural problems.

The ability of the USSR to fulfill midrange production goals for meat and grain will be a major test for Soviet agriculture. Brezhnev has called for meat production to reach 19.5 million tons by 1985. If accomplished, this would be an 11 percent increase over the tenth 5-year plan. The 1985 grain target suggested by Brezhnev in 1978 is 260 million tons, approximately a 10 percent increase over the last 5-year plan. Moreover, if the Soviet Union is to meet Brezhnev's recommendation of one ton of grain per capita by 1990, the USSR will have to produce a crop yield of 290 million tons. Unpredictable weather patterns and the lack of expected agriculture breakthroughs make it seem unlikely that the Soviets can achieve the projected goals for grain production.<sup>5</sup> As a result, shortfalls will continue to cause a reoccurring need to import grain. How much of the shortfalls can be offset will depend upon the USSR's ability to acquire grain on the world market. To the extent that the Soviet leadership intends to fulfill promises to improve consumer

conditions and is willing to spend hard currency, grain will be imported. However, an impending oil shortage with its potential adverse impact upon Soviet hard currency supplies may constrain Soviet abilities to import projected grain deficiencies. In the final analysis the future does not promise any significant changes in Soviet agriculture. In some years, grain production and imports will be enough to feed both the population and livestock herds. In other years it will not and the feast or famine syndrome of killing off livestock herds because of a bad grain harvest will probably continue throughout the 1980's.

Fourth, economic self-sufficiency is a basic Soviet tenet. Fortunately for Soviet advocates, the USSR is well-endowed with natural resources. But, it does not have all the natural resources that it needs and some are located in areas which make recovery not cost-effective. There are some indications that we may be observing the start of a trend of increased Soviet dependence upon foreign sources of selected natural resources.

The 1977 CIA report on Soviet oil production and imports generated an enormous amount of controversy. While significant debates over specifics of the report still exist, current production trends seem to bear out the prediction that by the late 1980's or early 1990's Moscow will become a net importer of oil. During the current decade, the Soviet Union will never be as dependent upon foreign sources of oil for its economic survival as are Western Europe, Japan, and the United States. However, if the Soviet Union does become a net oil importer, significant long-range implications could result not only for the Kremlin but also for the world as another major oil consumer competes in the oil market.

Currently, the USSR receives most of its hard currency from the export of raw materials. Exports of oil have usually accounted for 40-50 percent of Soviet hard currency earnings. Without sufficient hard currency funds, it will be difficult to acquire the Western technology which is needed to modernize the Soviet industrial base. Moreover, without sufficient accumulations of hard currency, the Kremlin could have a difficult time servicing its 50 billion dollar plus debt to the West. Again, this could have a significant adverse impact upon Soviet efforts to modernize its industries and acquire the needed technology to exploit natural resources in Siberia.

One way for the USSR to maintain its hard currency balance as oil production declines would be to shift oil away from its East

European allies to Western hard currency markets. There are, however, good reasons to believe that the Soviet Union would prefer not to adopt such an option, except as a last resort. Moscow has already encouraged its East European allies to look for other sources of oil and raised the price of Soviet oil near to world market prices. These actions have begun to strain some of the East European economies. If Moscow significantly reduced oil supplies to its allies, some nations would not be able to fulfill their pledges to improve domestic standards of living and provide more consumer goods. Events in Poland during 1970, 1976, and 1980 rather clearly demonstrate that failure to meet such pledges can spark political unrest and instability in at least one East European nation. Moreover, since Moscow has been able to achieve a significant control over its East European partners by acting as the predominant supplier of relatively cheap raw materials, any reduction in this role undoubtedly would result in some loss of Soviet influence in the region.

Soviet dependence upon external supplies of other critical resources is also increasing. Even though the USSR is the second leading producer of tin in the world, it imports 30 percent of its requirements and East European nations must import 90 percent of their requirements, primarily from Southeast Asian nations. The Soviet Union is self-sufficient in scrap and flake mica. However, it imports all its sheet mica which is needed to make critical electronic appliances. The USSR and East European allies import 100 percent of their natural rubber requirements from Southeast Asian nations. In recent years, Moscow has imported large quantities of beryllium for toughening metal, tantalum for use in electronic components, and lithium which is needed in aluminum production. Projections indicate that this trend toward greater Soviet dependence upon foreign sources of selected natural resources should continue.<sup>6</sup>

The Soviet Union will also experience a growing dependence upon foreign agricultural products. The principal imports of agricultural products that will be required for the 1980's are grain, animal feed, sugar, fruits, vegetables, coffee, tea, and cocoa. In addition, the USSR needs an assured access to large amounts of fish. This is one reason why the Kremlin will be quite interested in the Law of the Sea Conference. It is predicted that by the year 2000 Soviet fishermen will have to catch and return over 15 million tons of fish per year to satisfy Soviet and East European needs.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, demographic trends will complicate rather than facilitate Soviet attempts to deal with its basic domestic economic problems. Preliminary analysis of the 1979 census data indicates no major changes in demographic patterns noted in the last Soviet census.<sup>8</sup> The average population growth rate continues to decline. In fact, the 1970-79 average increase of .9 percent is slightly lower than Western demographers originally predicted the census would show. The growth distribution of Soviet population also remains very uneven. The Slavic nationalities, which traditionally have held the most important government and military positions in Russian and Soviet history, continue to experience a growth rate significantly lower than that of the Soviet Union as a whole. On the other hand, the rate of increase within the Central Asian republics is three to four times greater than the national average. Russians and Ukrainians still far outnumber the number of Central Asians. However, the exceptionally high rate of increase among the Central Asian nationalities indicates that the Soviet ethnic balance is likely to continue its shift toward Central Asia and the traditionally Muslim peoples of the region.

The continuation of this trend will significantly impact upon any Kremlin attempt to solve its basic economic problems. Central Asians are a very immobile people. The 1959 census showed that 96 percent of the five Central Asian nationalities lived in Central Asia and by 1970 the percentage had increased to 97 percent. Will the Kremlin be able to induce or coerce sufficient Central Asians to move to offset an expected manpower labor shortage in other areas of the USSR? This is a major issue confronting Soviet economic planners.

Any strategic assessment of the Soviet Union must take into consideration the virtual certainty that a major change in the Soviet leadership will occur in the coming decade. Exactly when the leadership change will occur, who or what group of individuals will assume the positions of authority, and what major changes, if any, in Soviet policy will occur is unclear at this date. However, it is possible to speculate about how the process will occur.

The impending leadership change will most likely occur in stages and will be a prolonged process. It took Stalin most of the 1920's before he undercut his rivals and consolidated his position of authority. Both Khrushchev and Brezhnev maneuvered with their rivals for at least 4 years before they emerged as first among equals.

Every indication is that a similar situation will occur when Brezhnev, either voluntarily or by death, leaves office.

The common expectation is that a caretaker regime, probably led by Andrei Kirilenko, will oversee the first succession stage. Since Kirilenko is three months older than Brezhnev and the other immediate Brezhnev heirs are at least in their late 60's, actuary tables would indicate that this caretaker regime would not remain in power for an extended period. During the first succession stage, no major changes in Soviet politics should occur. Those who will probably be in charge of the caretaker regime are identified with Brezhnev policies; they rose to power with or because of Brezhnev's support; they share the same World War II and postwar experiences with Brezhnev; and they seem to be committed to the goals which Brezhnev articulated. Since none of the potential heirs for the first succession stage have the prestige or political power to emerge as the uncontested head of the Party, a form of collective leadership should develop.

While the caretaker government oversees the immediate Brezhnev succession, a number of other rivals will probably vie for power. Only after this period of internal political maneuvering, which could last as long as 4 or 5 years, will a new Soviet General-Secretary emerge. During this second succession stage, a group of men with different political backgrounds than their predecessors will compete for power. Whoever emerges as the new Soviet leader will have no memories of prerevolutionary Russia or any personal knowledge of Lenin. He will have experienced World War II as a very young man. All of his secondary education will have occurred in the Stalin period. Most of his adult years will encompass the period when the USSR became a global military power. The incumbent will probably have long experience in management of the economy or the territorial party apparatus and very little experience in foreign affairs. The emerging generation of Soviet leaders will be better educated than their predecessors. This does not mean that they will be any more sophisticated than the preceding generation. Although they will be politically experienced, the emerging leadership group will not have the long tenure in very top ranks of the Soviet elite that Brezhnev and his associates had (virtually the entire postwar period). As a result, their claims for authority may be more easily questioned by rivals.

Will the new Soviet leadership be more aggressive and adventuresome? One school of thought is that the Soviet "window

of opportunity"—a period when Soviet military power is at its peak and before the above domestic problems begin to constrain Soviet options—is sometime during the 1980's.<sup>9</sup> A Soviet recognition that the window is closing, it is argued, could cause the Kremlin to use its military forces to gain strategic advantages before it loses the opportunity. However, if a succession struggle occurs sometime during the decade and historical precedent holds true, the USSR may actually enter a period of less active foreign policy as the new leaders attempt to consolidate their domestic positions. While one should not completely discount the possibility of a new orientation of Soviet policy, current analysis of the backgrounds and known attitudes of the emerging leadership group suggests fundamental continuity in Soviet policy through the midrange. Their memories of the Great Patriotic War and considerable pride in the USSR's postwar rise to superpower status, as well as their 20-year tutelage by a political leadership that has emphasized stability of personnel and policy, "business-like" caution, and consensus-seeking decisions, suggests that the new Soviet leaders will be primarily nationalistic and pragmatic rather than ideological in their approach to world politics. This does not mean that the Soviet threat to US interests will diminish during the midrange. Rather, it means that another Khrushchev-style personality, who leads the USSR off into erratic policy zigzags, will probably not emerge as the new Soviet leader for the 1990's.

Over the coming decade, it is only natural to expect that the Soviet Union will attempt to improve its regional position and enhance its security position. To the extent possible, the Kremlin will continue its efforts to drive wedges between Europe and the United States using the traditional carrot-and-stick approach. Continued modernization of Soviet military forces will be the primary stick as the Soviets attempt to convince the Europeans that it is not in their best interest to undertake military initiatives and modernization programs which the United States wants to see occur. Recognizing that Europeans, particularly West Germans, believe that detente has resulted in practical political and economic benefits, the USSR may attempt to hold out increased German migration and enhanced trade as rewards for improved Soviet-European relations. The Kremlin may even attempt to manipulate the FRG's dependence on Soviet natural gas to obtain political concessions from Bonn. If the current US disinterest in detente

continues, Moscow will probably use this as another lever to create friction between the United States and its allies.

Forecasts about future Sino-Soviet relations are uncertain at best. Improved Sino-Soviet relations are surely a desired Soviet objective. However, since at least the mid-1970's, the divisive factors between the two Communist giants have intensified while Sino-American relations have improved. Without a radical change in Chinese leadership and threat perception, it is unlikely that Sino-Soviet relations will improve greatly during the midrange. As a result, the Sino-Soviet conflict will continue to impact upon not only Sino-Soviet but also Soviet-American relations. For the United States, the continuation of the Sino-Soviet conflict has certain potential advantages. Moscow's concern about the "yellow peril" makes it less likely that the USSR would risk a political-military confrontation in Western Europe. The dispute has caused the Soviet Union to direct between 25-30 percent of its land forces against China, leaving them virtually unavailable for other contingencies. Moreover, the dispute is a major factor in improved Chinese-American relations. On the other hand, intensification of the Sino-Soviet conflict could lead to full-scale conflict. If this should occur, the United States would be confronted by some major policy decisions given its growing relationship with the PRC. Should the United States attempt to terminate the conflict in order to preserve a Eurasian balance of power? Which side should the United States support? Could the United States use its political influence to terminate the conflict or would US or allied military troops be required? If intervention is required should the United States help defend China?

Military strength should continue as the main element of Soviet international behavior in the midrange. Soviet leaders believe that the growth of their military power has permitted them to pursue a more active policy in the Third World and to expand Soviet influence. They see military strength as a crucial element not only for expanding Soviet influence in the future, but also for consolidating and preserving past gains. They correctly perceive that military strength is the foundation of the Soviet Union's status as a global power. Since it is unlikely that any major domestic economic improvements will occur to enhance the perception of the Soviet Union as a global economic power, the Kremlin leaders will most likely provide the military with the necessary financial

support to allow continued modernization and expansion of the armed forces.

This assessment is particularly disturbing to some observers because there is already a growing concern in the American defense community over significantly improved Soviet "power projection" and "global reach" capabilities. Extensive force modernization programs have been carried out during the Brezhnev era. They have provided the Soviets with improved equipment and new military capabilities. These capabilities have allowed the Kremlin to exploit opportunities which it was unable to do in the past. The Soviet Union is now involved in areas of the world where it traditionally never ventured. The Kremlin can now provide friends and allies (as well as its own forces) with equipment, supplies, and military assistance to a degree that previously was impossible. This capability is obvious when one compares the level of assistance that Moscow could provide Angola, Ethiopia, Egypt, Vietnam, and Afghanistan in the 1970's with its lack of capability in the Congo in the 1960's.

In the past, the USSR has been willing to resort to the use or threatened use of military force to advance its own interests when it believed that it could do so cheaply and with minimum risk to Soviet interests. With improved military capabilities, there is every reason to believe that the Kremlin will continue to pressure, probe, and test the will of the United States. The main risk of such an approach is that a new Soviet leadership, which is inexperienced in foreign affairs, may inadvertently provoke a crisis in the Third World before discovering the limits of translating superpower strength into useable political influence.

An important determinant of Soviet behavior will be Soviet perceptions of the United States. There is no reason to believe that Moscow wants to initiate a direct conflict with the United States. The fear that such a confrontation may escalate to nuclear war still constrains Soviet actions. If Moscow believes that the United States has the capability and will to react to Soviet military initiatives, it probably will be more cautious. On the other hand, if the perception is, as it apparently was accurately calculated prior to the Angola, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan adventures, that the United States will not react militarily or US interests are only marginal in a particular region, the Soviet Union will probably be more inclined to use its own or proxy forces to enhance Soviet influence and interests.

Despite major improvements in Soviet forces, it is also important to keep in mind that significant military constraints do exist which adversely impact upon Soviet force projection capabilities for the midrange. Heavy ground force divisions with their primary mission to repel a NATO attack and then to initiate a blitzkrieg counterattack are difficult to project to areas which are noncontiguous to the Soviet Union. Although the Soviets have just launched a nuclear cruiser and indications are that the construction of a large nuclear aircraft carrier may take place, naval ship construction rates indicate that the largest share of the Soviet Navy's growth in the 1980's will continue to be in two nonforce projection areas: strategic nuclear submarines and antisubmarine warfare. Also, logistical weaknesses will continue to limit Soviet abilities to sustain at-sea combat operations, if they occur in areas distant from the Soviet Union. The current afloat replenishment force is structured primarily for peacetime operations. While new larger and faster replenishment ships are being built, the pace of construction is too slow to overcome the navy's combat logistic shortcomings during the midrange. Finally, current Soviet military transportation aircraft (VTA) are not air-refuelable. If Moscow cannot obtain landing and refueling rights, VTA reach capability is limited to no more than 2,000 miles from Soviet borders. Also, the Soviets stopped producing the AN-22 (the only Soviet plane capable of carrying outsized loads like tanks) in 1974 when there were only 50 in the inventory. Since no replacement for the AN-22 has entered the Soviet inventory, it seems safe to say that Soviet capabilities to airlift outsized loads will be somewhat constrained throughout most of the 1980's.

Moscow does have the capability to support certain types of Third World insurrections and guerrilla activities when its clients are unopposed by a sophisticated military adversary. The Soviet Navy can serve as an interpositionary force in many Third World conflicts and thus increase the risk calculations required by American policymakers. In areas close to the USSR—the North Atlantic, Eastern Mediterranean, South Asia, and North Pacific regions—where the Soviet naval and ground forces are concentrated and they can obtain reliable air support, Soviet forces could obtain a geopolitical advantage over the United States. Any US military operation in such areas would be a risky undertaking. However, as one moves further from the USSR, Soviet warfighting

and force projection capabilities become less significant and, in some cases, insignificant.

The recent invasion of Afghanistan occurred within that arc of primary Soviet geopolitical advantage. Moscow was able to move ground divisions by way of long, methodical road marches from bases within Russia to major Afghan cities easily within range of VTA capabilities. Moreover, if it had been required, tactical fighters could have been deployed from Soviet bases and range and refueling constraints would have been significant. These conditions of Soviet advantage, which maximized Soviet military capabilities in Afghanistan, may not exist as one moves further from Soviet borders. This is an important factor to keep in mind as increasingly concerned US policymakers inevitably begin to reassess the implications of Soviet "power projection" and "global reach" capabilities in the aftermath of the Afghanistan invasion.

## STRATEGIC ISSUES AND OPTIONS

Given US interests and objectives and Soviet trends, what are the major strategic issues confronting the United States in the midrange and what options should be adopted to deal with those issues? In the coming decade, to pursue or not to pursue arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union will be an area of major concern that will impact upon US interests and objectives. Should the United States suspend arms negotiations because of repugnant Soviet behavior, particularly in the Third World, or, should the United States pursue arms control negotiations almost without regard to linkage because they are in US interests? If it is Soviet military might or the potential for unrelenting growth of the Soviet military that the United States fears most, then it seems logical that arms control negotiations should be pursued. Refusing to talk to the Soviets about SALT, MBFR, nuclear proliferation, or other arms negotiations seems rather foolish. Arms control negotiations are not—and should not be—separate actions sought merely to limit the size of defense arsenals or reduce costs. Rather, arms control negotiations should contribute to national defense by providing force programmers and strategists with some reasonable idea of what maximum forces the adversary will have at its disposal in the future. Without reasonable arms negotiations and limitations, there is no "expected ceiling or umbrella" for the

Soviet Union to grow toward and not exceed. Without successful arms negotiations and limitations, Western strategists are left to guess what the Soviets will consider their optimum ceiling to be. But with successful arms control negotiations an opponent's future forces can be fixed, and, as a result, strategic planning and procurement policies can be tailored for an expected future. Therefore, early consideration of the SALT II treaty is essential. Then, negotiations toward a SALT III treaty which considers technological limitations should begin almost immediately.

Another major issue of strategic importance for the coming decade is for the United States to decide for itself and then communicate with the Soviet Union over what is acceptable superpower behavior in the Third World. Too often one is left with the impression that there is no level of acceptable Soviet behavior in the Third World. However, the Soviet Union is extensively engaged in the Third World; it has interests and objectives in the Third World; and no amount of wishful thinking will cause the Kremlin to turn to a policy of benign neglect toward the Third World.

Clearly it is not in American interests for the Soviet Union or its proxies to use military force to overthrow governments with which it disapproves. Likewise, it is not in US interests for Soviet proxies or clandestine agents to provoke anarchy, civil war, or domestic disturbances that lead to the overthrow of legitimate governments. The United States also does not want to see the Soviets use proxy forces to pressure or influence the outcome of civil wars or revolutions. However, is the use of military force never acceptable in the Third World? Does the United States condemn the use of all proxies, even the Iranians in the Dofar Rebellion or Moroccans, Belgians, and French in the Shaba Province? If that is what we are asking of the Soviet Union, then the United States should also be willing to forego the use or threatened use of force to influence events in the Third World. Is covert manipulation of Third World domestic politics acceptable for the United States but not for the Soviet Union? When some analysts deplore the web of Soviet treaties of friendship and cooperation, should this be interpreted to mean that the United States opposes all political-military pacts, even those that the United States has signed calling for mutual defense obligations?

These and other similar sorts of questions need to be answered in the coming decade as the United States attempts to sort out the

parameters of what it thinks are acceptable levels of superpower behavior in the Third World. The Soviets probably will never sign a formal "rules of behavior." Mutual trust between the two superpowers is lacking, and both countries would seriously question if the other would abide by any such formal agreement. Nevertheless, the Soviets have a stake in predictability. On one hand, predictability helps to insure against accidental superpower conflicts. On the other hand, predictable levels of unacceptable behavior could be used as tools to curb the designs of more aggressive Soviet domestic factions and to constrain some allies, e.g., Vietnam, from initiating actions which could draw the Soviets into conflicts that they may prefer to avoid.

To some degree the United States should welcome a shift in strategic interests and competition with the Soviet Union toward the Third World. The most critical problems confronting most Third World nations are problems of modernization and how to: establish stable governments in newly independent states; provide adequate health and educational services; diversify economic and political systems while at the same time safeguarding and maintaining social values; develop managerial expertise among political leaders which equips them to govern a modern nation-state; and accommodate the rising expectations of a growing middle class which is an almost inevitable creation of successful modernization. The Soviet record in responding to such problems is not all that good. While Moscow does provide technical assistance to help Third World nations overcome the lack of expertise in managing and operating aid projects, Soviet economic aid is still targeted toward a few countries which receive large credits for high visibility, heavy industry projections. Very little assistance is provided to help nations manage the social, economic, and political ramifications of the modernization process. On the rhetorical level, the USSR has given its qualified indorsement of the South's call for a New International Economic Order (NIEO). In practice, it has done very little to provide firm economic or political assistance.

The United States has considerable capability to assist in the development of public health, education, and civil works projects. It is in US interests to initiate actions, which not only highlight the inconsistency between Soviet actions and words on the NIEO issue, but also demonstrate US commitment to help Third World nations

meet their political and economic infrastructure needs. Constructive efforts—particularly in the area of increased security assistance and foreign aid—and not just empty declaratory policies are necessary. The United States currently ranks 13th among the 17 major industrial nations in the percentage of Gross National Product dedicated to developmental assistance. US foreign aid and assistance should be increased significantly, not because of some idea that money will buy friends and allies for the United States, but rather because such programs can go a long way toward eliminating the causes which invite Soviet meddling in the Third World and work against the US world order objective of stability.

A shift in military competition away from Central Europe, where the United States faces the Soviet Union at its strongest point, to other areas, where the United States can bring its superior experience in global military operations and maritime power to bear, is also in US interests. However, a more flexible military strategy and force structure will be required in the midrange if the United States is to exploit its advantages. Currently, the US military is predominantly planned, programmed, and budgeted for a European contingency. Most active Army divisions are now heavy and some of the remaining nonheavy divisions are being considered for conversion to increase their antiarmor capabilities. While they may be appropriate for a European contingency, heavy divisions are less suitable for numerous other non-NATO contingencies. Also, by their very nature, heavy divisions are not rapidly transportable and the United States has been driven toward forward positioning of equipment, supplies, and material in Europe to support those divisions in case of conflict. As a result, the divisions, their supporting units, and supplies and equipment cannot easily be deployed to other contingencies. The 1973 Middle East War pointed out how prepositioning could curtail US flexibility, if the United States has to have the prior approval of the host nation before supplies and material can be moved.

But heavy divisions and prepositioning are only part of the problem. US strategy needs to become more flexible, less myopic, and not so single European scenario-oriented. While US military strategists have begun to recognize this problem, force programmers continue to build forces on the European scenario, and, as a result, constrain strategists' options. The defense of Europe will continue to be a vital US interest. However, the

complexity of the international trends and wide range of potential conflicts facing the United States will ultimately require a more flexible strategy than heretofore has been within US capabilities.

If the United States is serious in its desire to obtain strategic flexibility, some changes in the positioning of forward deployed forces may have to occur in the midrange. Rather than being an integral part of static line defenses in Europe and Korea, Army divisions may need to be pulled away from the immediate border areas. In the event of conflict, such repositioning would present policymakers with more alternatives than the current posture provides. US forces would be in less of a tripwire position, providing the opportunity to seek termination before US prestige and forces were decisively engaged. But more importantly, with allies providing the first line of defense, US forces could be used as reserves to augment European and Korean forces at the most crucial defense points. In addition, US forces could be in a better position to be used in other contingencies. It is probably not politically feasible or wise to bring major contingents of US forces back to the United States or to undertake major reductions in size of US overseas forces. Such actions would probably reduce US flexibility, result in units being lost to the force structure, and cause allies to question US resolve and will.

As the United States pursues strategic flexibility, it is imperative to articulate for itself, allies, and adversaries that the alliance strategy will remain the cornerstone of US foreign policy. However, alliances are two-way streets and burden-sharing among allies will have to continue to exist as allies exploit their own individual advantages to fulfill the objectives of any alliance strategy. The United States cannot and should not be expected to unilaterally police the world. It is helpful—and necessary—for the Europeans and Japanese to assume a greater responsibility for their own regional defense. This can reduce the US burden and provide greater opportunities for the United States to use its forces elsewhere. The United States can support allies and use its military capabilities where it has advantages over its allies, particularly in the area of global military operations. However, the United States should not assume a disproportionate share of the risk associated with any such alliance burden-sharing strategy. For example, if the protection of oil supplies is vital to the national survival of US allies, they need to participate in the defense of the oil SLOC. The

United States should not be expected to take actions to defend Middle East/Persian Gulf oil supplies, which could end in nuclear confrontation, without allied participation. If the United States is defending allied interests, which in reality are more important to them than to the United States, US allies should also bear some of the risks. Failure of US allies to participate in the defense of their own interests could very well result in US domestic political pressures to curb US military initiatives to defend the flow of oil to Europe and Japan. Such an event would not be in the best interests of either the United States or its allies.

Because alliances are the cornerstone of US foreign policy, they should not be entered into lightly. Allies are precious commodities and they need to be cultivated and nurtured. There should be a reasonable assurance that once an alliance is entered into that it will survive. Moreover, any alliance must have sufficient domestic support so that the United States can fulfill its commitments in time of stress. Just because a nation feels threatened, opposes the Soviet Union, or requests US assistance, are not sufficient reasons for the United States to associate itself with unstable regimes, even if, for the short run, US interests are advanced. For a mutually beneficial relationship to occur, the United States and a potential ally must have some common perception of the threat, as well as some commonality in long-range goals and interests. These latter factors often do not exist with unstable, Third World regimes which usually makes any association with them a temporary rather than a long-term phenomenon.

## OUTLOOK

These are just a few of the options for the 1980's that need to be considered. Strategists will have to reexamine traditional ways of doing things (e.g., positioning of US forces). Improvements in US military force posture, particularly general purpose conventional forces, will be an important task. But, military initiatives should not be viewed as panaceas. Attention needs to be given to political and economic options where US advantages vis-a-vis the Soviet Union should be significant. Of primary importance, it is necessary to recognize that adverse trends could constrain Soviet options during the 1980's. As a result, it is not a given that the 1980's will be an era in which Moscow will have more political-military

advantages than does Washington. How successful the United States is in achieving its national interests will depend in large measure on the strategist's ability to balance US shortfalls in certain areas with advantages in others. The strategist's task is a difficult one but it is achievable.

## ENDNOTES

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